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Unity of Effort During Noncombatant Evacuation Operations

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Unity of Effort During Noncombatant Evacuation Operations

The political object is the goal, war is a means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.

-- Carl von Clausewitz¹

Unity of effort between the Departments of State and Defense is essential to the successful execution of a noncombatant evacuation. The military is usually the last resort in a series of evacuation options. When possible the Department of State evacuates as many American citizens as possible by private or commercial methods. When these methods are no longer available, usually because the airlines can no longer get insurance to land at the local airport, military assistance is requested. When requested, the Department of State's objective is to evacuate U.S. citizens while maintaining overall national security interests. The military objective is the quick and safe removal of U.S. civilians. To achieve unity of effort, both the embassy and the military must coordinate from the earliest stages of deliberate planning, through crisis action planning, and continue until either the evacuation is executed or the country stabilizes and an evacuation is no longer required. This paper makes a case for improving the coordination between the embassy and the military, specifically the regional commander-in-chief (CINC), so that the desired end state is achieved.

BACKGROUND

The Department of State is responsible for the evacuation of American citizens. The Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Anti-terrorism Act of 1986 (22 United States Code 4802)

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places responsibility for the overseas protection of U.S. citizens and the safeguarding of U.S. property with the Department of State. Included in this is the requirement to

"develop and implement policies and programs to provide for safe and efficient evacuation of United States Government personnel, dependents, and United States citizens when their lives are endangered."²

Department of State evacuation policy is contained in the *Emergency Planning*Handbook. This handbook provides the general authorities and organization of an evacuation, the different types of evacuations, and requirement to prepare plans for an emergency evacuation. This handbook is supplemented with the *Evacuation Manual*, which contains examples of the paperwork which needs to be completed during an evacuation, evacuation checklists, and other reference materials.

The Department of Defense becomes involved in an evacuation only when requested by the Department of State. Department of Defense doctrine on overseas evacuations is contained primarily in Joint Publication 3-07.5 *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Noncombatant Evacuation Operations,* which provides guidance to combatant commanders, joint force commanders, and subordinate component commanders. This publication is supplemented by individual service guidance, such as Navy EXTAC 1010, *Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO)*, which provides service-specific guidance.

Interaction between the Departments of State and Defense are governed by a memorandum of understanding on emergency evacuations. Under terms of this memorandum:

the military commander shall conduct those operations (evacuations) in coordination with and under the policies established by the Principal US Diplomatic or Consular Representative.³

However, the military commander is not under the command of the ambassador. Rather the commander is "solely responsible for conducting the operations." Basically, parallel chains of command exist with the military reporting through the regional CINC to the Secretary of Defense and the ambassador reporting to the Secretary of State. Disputes between the military commander and the ambassador would be settled at senior levels within the administration. In short, the military plays a key supporting role, but the ambassador is still responsible and accountable for emergency evacuations and usually views the military as the last resort in a series of evacuation options.

EVACUATION OPTIONS.

Americans are evacuated from foreign countries because their lives are in danger, usually as the result of civil unrest or political instability. The civil unrest may not be anti-American in nature, but Americans can get caught in the fray and their lives can be endangered. On occasion, such as when Mount Pinatubo erupted in the Philippines, they are evacuated as the result of natural disaster.

The emphasis of a non-combatant evacuation is on American citizens, but the ambassador may also authorize the evacuation of non-American citizens. American evacuees include U.S. diplomats, other U.S. government employees, eligible family members, Americans working for international organizations, American business people temporarily working in the county, expatriates, tourists, and other American citizens who may be in the country. It does not include military personnel under the command of the regional CINC. In addition, many times third country nationals are also evacuated at the request of their country. For example, during the 1997 evacuation of Sierra Leone 80 countries requested assistance in

evacuating their citizens when the U.S. military evacuated American citizens. This resulted in the evacuation of 2,500 people and included the largest single-day evacuation in history.⁵ In the past, limited numbers of host country citizens have also been evacuated.

Political unrest is generally progressive in nature. As political unrest increases within a country, the Department of State will attempt to get as many Americans out of the country as early as possible. For example, as unrest increased in Sierra Leone, the ambassador convinced approximately 500 of 800 American citizens to leave the country on commercial flights. To keep additional Americans from entering the country, the Department of State issues a "travel warning" which warns Americans not to travel to the country because the situation is dangerous and embassy can do little to assist if the citizen gets into trouble.

Evacuations are likewise generally progressive in nature. The first stage is "authorized departure" during which the Department of State authorizes the departure of non-essential official American employees and dependents. Under authorized departure no one is compelled to leave – it is voluntary. Non-government American citizens are notified of the decision so that they can leave the country if they desire. Department of State policy is that private American citizens will have access to the same information both in timing and content as the official American community.⁸

If tensions continue to rise, the Department of State moves toward "ordered departure" during which dependents are ordered to leave the country and the embassy reduces its personnel to the minimum necessary to continue basic operations. American citizens are notified of the drawndown and are advised to leave the country. Non-government U.S. citizens cannot be ordered to leave and may desire to remain in the country regardless of the

danger. For example, during Operation Desert Storm some U.S. citizen spouses of Iraqi citizens stayed in Iraq.

The highest level of evacuation is when a post closes and *all* official American personnel are ordered to leave. However, the situation may deteriorate so rapidly that the embassy may go from normal operations to ordered departure with closure in a matter of days. When the president of Rawanda died in 1994, an evacuation was ordered and the embassy was closed within three days. The intermediate steps of authorized and ordered departure of non-essential personnel were never used. Likewise, while the embassy may evacuate all non-essential personnel, the embassy itself may remain open with a skeleton staff to provide an American presence, as occurred during the civil war in Liberia. 10

Use of the military is the last resort in the progression of evacuation operations.¹¹

Generally, as long as American citizens can leave the country by commercial means military assistance will not be requested. Once the insurance companies cancel the insurance for commercial or charter planes landing at the airport, military assistance may have to be requested. Since October 1988, the military has assisted in 19 evacuations (4 times in 1997), but the embassy has actually closed only 9 times, as can be seen in the following table.¹²

1. Evacuations: October 1988 - Present

Authorized Departure		54
Authorized then Ordered Departure		17
Only Ordered Departure		45
Post Closure	(9)	
Military Assisted	(19)	
TOTAL EVACUATIONS		116

Note: 34 evacuations were the result of Desert Shield/Desert Storm, and 3 evacuations were the result of natural disaster

Another Department of State incentive for early departure is that the longer it waits the more expensive the evacuation. Evacuations are paid out of the Appropriation for Emergencies in the Diplomatic and Consular Service; however, the Department of State is reimbursed by non-State evacuees. If commercial transportation is available, non-State civilians will buy their tickets directly from the airline. If the Department of State charters aircraft, other federal agencies reimburse the Department of State for the cost of evacuating their personnel and non-government civilians sign a promissory note for the cost of the ticket. Civilians are denied further passports until the promissory notes are paid. No mechanism exists to collect evacuation costs from third country nationals.

Likewise, when the Department of Defense assists, State pays the cost, but it is much higher. Military-assisted evacuations cost more than \$3 million each. For example, the Department of Defense billed the Department of State \$3.9 million for evacuation of Albania (approximately \$4,800 per evacuee) and \$7.6 million for the evacuation of Sierra Leone (approximately \$3,000 per evacuee). About \$6 million is annually appropriated for the Emergency Fund; any excess costs have to be taken out of other operating funds. 13

The costs of using military aircraft are passed on to private American citizens and other non-State personnel. For example, during the 1992 evacuation of Sierra Leone the Air Force flew the evacuees from Freetown, Sierra Leone to Accra, Ghana on a C-130. The cost of that flight was about the same as a first class ticket from Freetown to Amsterdam. For the missionaries who were evacuated this was an extravagance which they could not afford and which damaged relations between the embassy and the American community. ¹⁴ In short, the

Department of State has an incentive to get as many American civilians out of the country as early as possible to avoid the high costs of military assistance.

POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The decision to evacuate an embassy is political. The United States has long-term political interests in foreign countries including regional stability, economic and business interests, humanitarian concerns, and the protection of the lives and safety of its citizens. As a situation deteriorates, the crucial question becomes timing – when is it in the U.S. national interest to evacuate U.S. citizens? The embassy must consider a number of variables, including:

- the ability and willingness of the host government to provide adequate levels of protection;
- that an evacuation will be interpreted as "lack of confidence" in the host country's government;
- that an evacuation could increase the civil unrest and political violence; and
- that other countries may evacuate their citizens if the United States evacuates
 American citizens.

The earlier a decision is made to reduce the number of Americans, the less disruption there will be in the country and the less likely the military will be needed. In all but the most life-threatening situations, the embassy will remain open to conduct foreign relations, albeit with a reduced staff. However, pursuit of the foreign policy objectives are usually not jeopardized by the departure of family members. Consequently, the number of Americans can

be reduced while the environment is still permissive. Once it becomes non-permissive the evacuation can be hazardous to the safety of personnel.

Ambassadors are expected to start the evacuation process when American citizens are in imminent danger. The Department's *Emergency Planning Handbook* states:

To encourage initiative and candor, the Department's policy is that any such recommendation (to evacuate) shall be regarded as evidence of responsibility and there shall be no criticism of a chief of mission's recommendation or other adverse consequences, even if the anticipated threat or hazard should fail to materialize.¹⁵

Even when the military assists in an evacuation, U.S. political interests will influence how the operation is conducted. The military objective in an evacuation is the safety and quick removal of civilian noncombatants. However, in most instances the military will not have the authority to use proactive military measures to preempt hostile actions. Usually, the military will protect civilian noncombatants with force proportional to the threat and try to avoid any armed conflict. Once deadly force is used the appearance of neutrality is destroyed which has ramifications for the conduct of foreign relations. For example, the ability of the embassy to carry out its functions could be seriously hampered if the brother of the country's president is killed at a road block during the evacuation. To ensure the appropriate balance between political and military objectives requires unity of effort between the Departments of State and Defense in both the deliberate and crisis action planning stages.

DELIBERATE PLANNING

Deliberate planning begins with the preparation of the emergency action plan by the embassy. The emergency action plan is prepared based on guidance in the *Emergency*Planning Handbook and guidance from the Department of State in Washington. The

emergency action plan covers the different emergencies which may occur at an overseas mission, including such situations as fire evacuation, airplane crashes, U.S. citizen hostages, and civil disturbances. One section deals with emergency evacuations and contains the basic information needed by the mission to conduct the evacuation, either by commercial means or with military assistance. It is not a military operational plan; rather it is a plan for embassy actions during an emergency evacuation including:

- Possible courses of action for different threat environments;
- Location of staging and evacuation sites;
- Location of the command post and any alternates;
- Anticipated number of evacuees;
- Embassy assets available for use during an evacuation;
- Key embassy personnel;
- Recall procedures for U.S. government personnel;
- Warden system procedures for notifying non-government U.S. citizens;
- Key host nation personnel, their telephone numbers, and addresses; and
- Listings of key support facilities, such as airports, with telephone numbers and addresses of key personnel, such as the airport manager and airport police.

The emergency action plan is usually prepared by the regional security officer with input from the other sections of the mission. For example, the consular section maintains the warden system for notifying non-government American citizens of the situation in country.

The administrative section maintains the recall system for U.S. government employees. These sections provide input to the regional security officer for inclusion in the emergency action plan.

Not all embassies have military personnel at post which can provide input into the emergency action plan. The regional security officer is a professional security officer; however, he is not a military officer and needs military assistance with the emergency evacuation plan. For example, the regional security officer may designate a helicopter landing zone, but he probably is not a pilot and is probably not qualified to make a professional judgment on the adequacy of the site. Assistance may be available from the Defense Attaché if there is one at post. However, many of the countries where evacuations take place do not have Defense Attachés at post and may not have a Marine Security Guard detachment. For example, the embassy in Bangui had no military presence at post prior to the 1997 evacuation of the Central African Republic. The lack of military at post increases the need for out-of-country military assistance during the deliberate planning phase.

Once completed, the emergency action plan is submitted to the Department of State and to the regional CINCs for review and approval. The Department of State review is, for the most part, a review to ensure that the plan is updated as required and has the proper sections. State is not staffed to review the plan for adequacy and feasibility. While Joint Publication 3-07.5 indicates that an interagency Washington Liaison Group ensures "coordination of planning and implementation of plans," in reality this group is established at the beginning of a crisis and is not involved in the review of emergency action plans during the deliberate planning phase.

The regional CINCs review emergency action plans for accuracy, acceptability, and feasibility. Often this includes a visit to post, especially if the likelihood of an evacuation exists. In the European Command, for example, regional survey teams visit posts. These teams are usually comprised of special forces personnel who "walk the ground" to ensure that

the plan is feasible and recommend changes as appropriate. However, due to funding and other constraints, these teams do not visit posts after every update of the emergency action plan.²¹

The regional CINCs maintain copies of the emergency action plans for use during a crisis. The CINCs have also developed generic contingency plans for evacuations that, when combined with the embassy's emergency action plan, form the basis for the military operation. The operational plan is usually finalized during the crisis planning phase.

Evacuation plans are never fully exercised. The Department of State conducts "table-top" exercises at posts likely to be evacuated. These exercises include responsible personnel at post, such as the regional security officer, but do not include all personnel at post who would be evacuated during an emergency. In most countries political considerations and host country sensitivities prevent the embassy from forming convoys, moving to staging areas, processing evacuees, or doing an evacuation exercise with the military. For example, the ambassador to an African country was almost declared a persona non grata when he tried to exercise the embassy evacuation plan by moving personnel to the assembly areas. The host country viewed the exercise as an expression of lack of confidence in the government and its ability to ensure peace and security.²²

Likewise, the regional CINCs do not exercise specific emergency evacuation plans.

The Marine Corps does a generic exercise in the United States before deployment of the Marine Expeditionary Units. This Special Operations Capability Exercises include Department of State personnel who roleplay the ambassador and other embassy personnel; however, these will not be the same State personnel who would be evacuated in an emergency. While this exercise exposes the Marine Expeditionary Unit to an imaginary

embassy and the ambassador's authority and responsibility, an actual evacuation would require that the embassy and the military evacuation task force work together to develop a coordinated plan for an evacuation.²³

CRISIS PLANNING

Ambassadors monitor the day-to-day conditions within their country through the country team. This team is composed of the principal members of the political, economic, consular, and administrative sections. In addition, the principal members from other agencies at post, such as the Director of the Agency for International Development, the Public Affairs Officer from the United States Information Service, the Defense Attaché, and Agricultural Attaché from the Department of Agriculture are included. Each of the agencies on the country team are focused on different aspects of the host country. The country team concept is intended to keep all U.S. government agencies pulling together in the same direction under the direction of the ambassador, rather than each agency doing its own thing in a vacuum. This concept is intended to form a synergistic foreign policy.

During a crisis the ambassador may call a special meeting of the country team to access the situation and determine what course of action should be taken. The various elements of the country team provide input on the situation from their agency's perspective. For example, the consular officer may note an increase in civil servants requesting visas, the economics officer may note a dramatic increase in the number of businesses remaining closed, and the agricultural officer may note an increase in food prices – all indicating that perhaps something is amiss.

As a situation deteriorates, the ambassador will convene the Emergency Action

Committee, which is a subset of the country team. The Emergency Action Committee

coordinates the embassy's response to an emergency and is the focal point for evacuations. It

is usually headed by the deputy chief of mission and has major input from the regional security

officer and the consular section. It is this committee which recommends evacuations to the

ambassador and is the embassy's "joint staff" coordinating the evacuation. The members have

contacts at various levels within the host country, from the chief executive level down to the

local police and military commanders. They also have contacts with various other groups,

such as dissidents, opposition political parties, labor union, and other embassies. In short,

they probably have the best human intelligence available on the unfolding condition in the

country and make their recommendations for evacuation based on this data.

The embassy keeps the Department of State in Washington informed of unfolding events. While the ambassador can order an evacuation under extreme circumstances, generally ambassadors request approval from the Department of State in Washington. As a situation deteriorates, a national level "Washington Liaison Group" is formed with State, Defense, and other government agency representatives to coordinate the planning and execution of a military assisted evacuation. This group monitors the situation and ensures that overall national security interests are considered in evacuation plans and operations. ²⁴

At the same time, the embassy should keep the regional CINC informed of the developing situation. Department of Defense Directive 3025.14 assigns responsibility for the planning and conducting of evacuations to the regional CINC. The sooner the regional CINC is aware that the Department of State may request assistance the sooner appropriate personnel can be identified and prepared for a possible evacuation mission.²⁵

While planning at this stage may appear to be strictly military, it is essential that the military and the embassy share a common perspective of the military and political objectives. The Emergency Action Committee probably has the best intelligence as to the situation on the ground and contacts should be established between the CINC and embassy. This contact can be through the Defense Attaché, if there is one at post, or the ambassador may request a liaison team. The best alternative for a liaison team would be for the same officers who performed the evacuation survey to return to the embassy. They have walked the ground and they know the embassy staff and could bring the communications equipment needed for direct contact between the regional CINC and the embassy. However, if any significant amount of time has passed, the officers who conducted the survey may well have rotated into new positions and would not be available and alternative liaison team members would need to be found.

When evacuation assistance is requested by the Department of State and approved by the National Command Authority, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will issue a warning order to the regional CINC. This warning order provides guidance on key areas of concern to the National Command Authority and provides an overview of the political context within which the evacuation will be conducted.²⁶ Once tasked, the regional CINC will designate a component command, such as a Marine Expeditionary Force, or a Joint Task Force to conduct the evacuation.

Close coordination is required between the evacuation commander and the embassy.

During the development of the commander's estimate of the situation, the embassy can provide three important pieces of current information: a summary of the political objectives and constraints and the reasoning behind the political interests, any modifications to the

embassy's emergency action plan, and the current situation on ground. The evacuation command can use this information and regional CINC's generic contingency plan to develop his courses of action.

Liaison teams are essential to effective management of a military-assisted evacuation. Teams can establish reliable communications between the embassy and the task force, facilitate the timely sharing of information between the embassy and the task force, and can translate military terminology and acronyms into language understood by the embassy. In addition, they bring a professional military view to the evacuation and can modify the evacuation plan for changed circumstances. When the Marine Expeditionary Unit is tasked with the evacuation, a Military Support and Liaison Team (MSALT) is often sent to post. This team not only establishes effective liaison, but also is the advance party for the evacuation task force and is integral to a successful evacuation.

CONCLUSION

In the total evacuation process, the military is the last resort in a series of evacuation options. If time permits and if properly conducted, the number of American citizens can be significantly reduced before military assistance is requested. Successful execution of military assisted evacuation requires close coordination and unity of effort between Defense and State because the evacuation is neither a unilateral military operation nor strictly an embassy operation. Evacuation plans cannot be prepared in a vacuum. Ignoring either the ambassador's or the evacuation commander's requirements and perspectives on the evacuation could doom the evacuation to failure. This coordination process can be refined

and improved both during the deliberate planning and crisis action planning as the following recommendations demonstrate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Joint Publication 3-07.5 should be revised to fully explain the need for consideration of the ambassador's political objective during an evacuation and the political constraints on the military during the execution of an evacuation. Phrases in military publications such as evacuations "may be viewed as a tacit admission of political failure," do not explain what an embassy is trying to accomplish with an evacuation. In addition, the role of the Washington Liaison Group and Regional Liaison Groups should be revised to explain that these groups are established during a crisis and are not involved in the deliberate planning process
- 2. Joint State-Defense guidance should be developed for the preparation of the military-assisted portion of the emergency action plan. Current guidance is not fully coordinated. For example, in Joint Publication 3-07.5 the warning order provides the national security interests and political constraints under which the evacuation commander must operate. In Department of State's *Evacuation Manual* the ambassador will provide these interests during the development of the commander's estimate of the situation. This can lead to differing perspectives on the evacuation and what should be accomplished.

Joint guidance could also eliminate some of differing jargon used by the Departments of State and Defense. Embassy personnel, for the most part, are not familiar with military ranks, acronyms, terms, and other jargon. Likewise, many military personnel are not familiar with diplomatic ranks, acronyms, terms, and other diplomatic jargon. For example, non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO) is a military term which may or may not be

understood by embassy personnel. To the embassy a NEO is an emergency evacuation. Joint State-Defense guidance could help communications during an actual crisis. Joint guidance could be a revised Joint Publication 3-07.5 applicable to the Department of State, to American embassies overseas, and to the Department of Defense.

3. Regional CINCs should send survey teams to "walk the ground" in the twenty or so countries worldwide where evacuations are most likely to occur. Alternatively, the Marine Expeditionary Units could send the Military Support and Liaison Teams to the four or five countries in their area of operations where they would most likely be called upon to conduct evacuation operations. These teams could be the main liaison with the embassy during an evacuation, bringing with them the ability to share information between the evacuation task force and the embassy in a timely manner. In practical terms, the regional CINCs need to ensure that survey or liaison teams visit the "hot spots" where evacuations would likely occur within their areas of operations on a frequent basis, perhaps as often as every nine to twelve months. This could be a tasking for the CINC's political advisor.

NOTES

- ¹ Carl Von Clausewitz, On War. Ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87.
- ² Foreign Relations and Intercourse, U.S. Code, Title 22 Responsibilities of the Secretary of State, sec. 4802
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⁴ Ibid.

- ⁵ "2 FSOs Recognized for Service in Sierra Leone," State Magazine, March 1998, 7.
- ⁶ Laura Lee Peters, former Ambassador to Sierra Leone, interview by author, April 21, 1998, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island.
- ⁷ Department of State, Evacuation Manual, (Washington, D.C.: 1994), Section V.

⁸ Ibid., Section IV.A1.3.

- ⁹ U.S. European Command, Operation Distant Runner (Rwanda NEO) After Action Report (Stuttgart, Germany: May 1994) 1.
- ¹⁰ Desmond P. Wilson, Operation Sharp Edge: The Role of Naval Forces in Evacuation Operations. (Arlington, Virginia: Center for Naval Analysis, 8 July 1991), 9. ¹¹ Evacuation Manual, Section III.A.

- ¹² John Harrelson, Director of Crisis Management Training, U.S. Department of State, telephone conversation with author, April 30, 1998.
- ¹³ Donna Bordley, Department of State Bureau of Financial Management and Planning, telephone conversation with author, May 11, 1998.

- ¹⁵ Department of State, *Emergency Planning Handbook*, (Washington, D.C.: June 15, 1995) H-1412.b.
- ¹⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations (Joint Publication 3-0) (Washington, D.C.: 1 February 1995), V-9.
- ¹⁷ Adam B. Siegel, Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEOs): An Analyst's How-To Guide, (Alexandria, Virginia: Center for Naval Analyses, 1993), 14.
- ¹⁸ LtCol Norm Robson, U.S.M.C., Commander of Task Force which Rescued American Citizens in the Central African Republic, May 1996. Telephone conversation with author, May 1, 1998.
- ¹⁹ Department of State, Audit of Emergency Evacuations, (Washington, D.C.: September 1995) 35-36.
- ²⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Noncombatant Operations (Joint Publication 3-07.5) (Washington, D.C.: 30 September 1997), II-1.
- ²¹ Robson telephone conversation.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Viktoria M. Lopatkiewicz, "Sending in the Marines... and Trained Civilians," State Magazine, (September/October 1997), 16-18
- ²⁴ Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Noncombatant Operations, II-1.
- ²⁵ Ibid., I-4.
- ²⁶ Ibid., III-3.
- ²⁷ Ibid., I-2.
- ²⁸ Ibid., III-3 and Evacuation Handbook, H-1533.4.

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